

In The Driver's Seat

It's Time To Get Your Tire Inspection Rolling

by Bobby Hamilton

(NAPSA)—It's the season for getting our vehicles in gear for 2006. Let's begin with the only part of your car or truck that actually touches the highway—your tires.



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The National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA) says underinflation is the leading cause of tire failure—and tire failure can lead to accidents.

Be your own crew chief and follow these simple guidelines from the NHTSA and other experts:

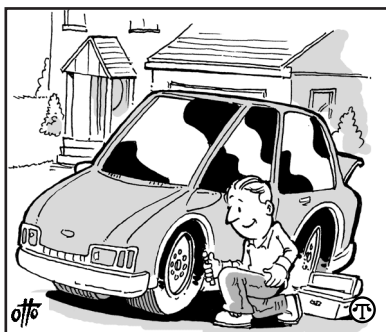
- **Take a peek at your tires:** Visually inspect your tires on a regular basis. Consumer Reports says consult a professional if you see cracks or cuts on the sidewalls. If you see bulges or blisters, which signal potential weak spots that could lead to tire failure, replace the tire at once.

- **Under pressure:** A tire doesn't have to be punctured to lose air. Tires naturally lose air over time. Check the pressure in all your tires—even the spare—at least once a month with a tire gauge.

- **How much air?:** Tires should be inflated to the psi, or pounds per square inch, recommended by the vehicle's manufacturer.

- **Time matters:** The best time for checking pressure is when a tire is "cold"—at least three hours after the vehicle has been driven. Even if you only drive your car around the block, the tire still needs to rest for three hours to get an accurate reading.

- **Tread test:** Make sure your tires have the proper amount of tread. Many tires have tread wear indicator bars molded into the tread. If you can see a solid bar of rubber across the width of the



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tread, it's time to buy new tires.

- **Rotation, rotation, rotation:** Most manufacturers recommend rotating tires every 5,000 to 8,000 miles. However, some four-wheel-drive vehicles require rotation even sooner, such as every 4,000 miles. Always check your owner's manual.

According to Brad Eggleston, vice president of AutoVantage, "One of the best precautions is proper tire maintenance, which keeps your vehicle humming during the often hazardous road conditions."

It's reported that members of AutoVantage (www.autovantage.com or 1-800-876-7787) can save from 5 to 20 percent on car care at some 19,000 service locations. AutoVantage is offered by Affinion Group, a leader in the membership, insurance and loyalty marketing businesses, providing products and services for millions of Americans.

Bobby Hamilton, a spokesman for AutoVantage, is the 2004 NASCAR Craftsman Truck Series Champion after achieving four career NASCAR Winston Cup Series victories. He founded Bobby Hamilton Racing, which owns and operates three trucks in the NASCAR circuit.